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**Enchanted Modernity, Anglicanism and the Occult in Early
Twentieth-Century Oxford:
Annie Moberly, Eleanor Jourdain and their “Adventure”
Revisited**

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Abstract

*In August 1901, two respectable, unmarried Edwardian ladies travelled backwards in time. On a sightseeing trip to the Court of Versailles, Annie Moberly and Eleanor Jourdain were transported back to 1792 where they encountered the soon-to-be-executed Queen Marie Antoinette. In 1911 they recounted their experiences in *An Adventure*, a book that was widely reviewed and ran to many editions. Throughout these episodes and their telling Moberly and Jourdain held the positions of Principal and Vice Principal of St Hugh's Hall, one of Oxford's newly established colleges for women students. Later historians and members of St Hugh's tended to dismiss them as 'potty' or attempted to protect their reputations as pioneers of women's education from (what was subsequently perceived to be) the embarrassment of *An Adventure*. This article revisits Moberly and Jourdain's "Adventure", historicising rather than pathologising or seeking to explain it away. Alongside the sceptical responses, there were many who believed Moberly and Jourdain, and the two women did not lose social or professional standing as a result of telling their story. In trying to understand why this should have been the case, the article draws upon two bodies of recent scholarship. Firstly, it examines *An Adventure* in light of work that has rejected older formulations of modernity as necessarily 'disenchanted', and instead argues for the blurring of boundaries between occult and scientific discourses. In many ways, the case of *An Adventure* exemplifies and furthers this thesis, showing how it was possible for two educated, professional, "modern" women to believe they had entered into "an act of memory" by Marie Antoinette that transported them backwards in time. Yet, while most scholarship interested in the relationship between modernity and enchantment focuses on the relationship between science and heterodox/occult religions, *An Adventure* brings another element to the discussion: orthodox Christianity, and the Anglican*

Church in particular. Moberly and Jourdain came from clerical families and were devout adherents of the Church of England. Their “Adventure” also, therefore, speaks to recent histories of Christianity in modern Britain, which have argued against an overly polarized and oppositional understanding of the relationship between Christianity and the occult, or Christianity and secular science, pointing to the churches’ capacity for adaptation and incorporation. The article traces the reception of An Adventure as a way to explore further the bases upon which such claims could be both made and judged as credible in a rapidly modernising early twentieth century Oxford. While highlighting the interconnections between the occult, Anglicanism and secular/scientific scholarship, the article argues that people at the time nevertheless carefully policed the boundaries of “legitimate” and “illegitimate” belief systems, a process informed by both gender and class.

Keywords

modernity, occult, secular, Anglican, gender

Introduction

For the year 1900-1901, Annie Moberly kept her appointments in a standard issue “Oxford University Pocket Diary”, which is now deposited in the Bodleian Library. The front and back sections of this diary are filled with as much useful information relating to both the town and the University as the printers could cram into its tiny pages: college addresses, omnibus and tram timetables, cab fares and a list of winners of the 1900 Oxford boat races. Information on the women’s colleges is included, despite the fact that their presence on the outskirts of Oxford was at this time only just tolerated, and would not receive full recognition from the University until 1921. Annie Moberly’s own name appears here, listed as Principal of St Hugh’s Hall (est.1886). Amidst all this printed paraphernalia – the traces of everyday life in turn-of-the-century Oxford – is Annie Moberly’s handwritten entry for 10th August 1901, which says, simply, “Versailles”. The brevity with which she referred to this day, however, belied not only the significance it would hold for her own life, but also the fact that it promised an experience decidedly at odds with the ordinary, everyday existence recorded in her pocket diary.

In August 1901 Annie Moberly (1846-1937) went on holiday to Paris, accompanied by Eleanor Jourdain (1863-1924) who was about to take up the position of Vice Principal at St Hugh’s. They were already acquainted, Moberly had in fact recommended Jourdain for the job, but the visit was primarily intended to cement their relationship and ensure that they got along well enough to work together in the future.¹ On 10th August, despite the cloudy and rather oppressive weather, Moberly and Jourdain decided to visit the Palace of Versailles, home to Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette in the final days before the Revolution. Having enjoyed walking about the Palace, they crossed the gardens to visit the Petit Trianon – a farmhouse where Marie Antoinette had played at milkmaid. Along the way the two women paused to ask directions from a number of rather strange figures, and passed others to whom they did not speak. They were also both overcome by a strong sense of depression, though neither admitted

this to the other until days afterwards. Eventually they arrived at the Petit Trianon, where they were jolted back to life by the arrival of a merry French wedding party, and from there they returned to Paris. They did not speak of their afternoon at Versailles for a whole week, though eventually Moberly, pondering upon the strange sensations she had experienced there, asked Miss Jourdain straight out: “Do you think that the Petit Trianon is haunted?” Jourdain responded immediately: “Yes I do”. It was not until November that Moberly and Jourdain were able to talk it over again at length, and not only did they agree that their encounters with various individuals – two gardeners, a running man and a “repulsive” male loitering near a garden kiosk – were rather odd, but also that Moberly had witnessed a woman sitting on a bank with a sketch book who had remained invisible to Jourdain. They decided to write out their own accounts of that afternoon, in order to better compare them, and so began Moberly and Jourdain’s explorations into the “truth” of their “Adventure” at Versailles.

The two women began to wonder whether they had gone back in time or, more precisely, if they had entered into the Queen’s memory itself – a memory so vivid “that some impression of it was imparted to the place.” For the date of their visit, 10th August, turned out to be the day that the Tuilleries were sacked in 1792, the beginning of the end for the French Royal family who were executed the following year. Eleanor Jourdain went back to Versailles in January 1902, where she had another strange experience, and the two women returned again in 1904 – only to find that the landscape they encountered this time was nothing like that they had navigated in 1901. “The result of this expedition”, wrote Moberly and Jourdain, “was to make us take a graver view of our first visit, and we resolved to look into the matter as carefully as we could...” Their historical investigations did not begin in earnest until 1906, but from then on serious research was undertaken to try to establish the identity of the figures they had encountered, and to match the topographical features of the garden with that of Versailles in 1792. The two “gardeners” were subsequently identified as guardsmen to Marie Antoinette,

while the sketching lady was believed to have been the Queen herself. The “repulsive”, pocked marked and “dark complexioned” man by the kiosk became the Comte de Vaudreuil, once a close friend of the Queen who later betrayed her to the Revolution. The running man, whose accent they later identified as Austrian, was thought to be a messenger coming to inform Marie Antoinette of an approaching mob from Paris. Their story and supporting evidence were finally published by Macmillan and co. as *An Adventure* in 1911.²

Though Moberly and Jourdain initially published this book under the pseudonyms Miss Morison and Miss Lamont, their authorship was an open secret in Oxford.³ For as soon as Moberly arrived back at St Hugh’s following her Versailles visit, she began to recount the tale not just to her friends but also to her professional associates. Edith Olivier, one of their students, claimed that she heard the story, and recorded it in her journal, “a few months after it happened”. Another student recollected that Moberly had assembled the entire college to inform them of her strange experiences.⁴ Winifred Mammet, Vice Principal of St Hugh’s before Jourdain, was told of Moberly’s “Adventure” almost as soon as it had occurred⁵, as was Mrs Graham Balfour, who at that time was acting as Honorary Secretary on St Hugh’s Council. Balfour recalled how she had been talking over matters of student accommodation with the Principal when Moberly “suddenly broke off the conversation by saying she had quite another matter of which she felt she must tell me.”⁶ Helen Deneke remembered hearing of the “Adventure” when she was a student at St Hugh’s in 1902, and also how, on a visit to Deneke’s mother’s house, Moberly had told Mrs Deneke the story too.⁷ After 1906, research into the “Adventure” took over the activities of St Hugh’s Senior Common Room. In the evenings, the young tutors would retire with Moberly and Jourdain to the drawing room, where the two older women would read chapters of their forthcoming book aloud to them, or debate the implications of their latest finding in the archives.⁸

An Adventure was reviewed widely, and its publishers Macmillan & co. sent a copy to the Society for Psychical Research (SPR). The SPR was founded in 1882 by the physicist William Barrett, the Spiritualist Edmund Dawson Rogers, and Professor of Moral Philosophy at the University of Cambridge Henry Sidgewick. It aimed to provide an intellectually respectable forum in which supernatural occurrences could be considered, claiming “to examine without prejudice or pre-possession and in a scientific manner those faculties of man, real or supposed, which appear to be inexplicable in terms of any generally recognized hypothesis”.⁹ First Moberly and then Jourdain met with Alice Johnson, secretary of the SPR, to whom they submitted their early written accounts of their experiences at Versailles and the corroborating evidence they had so painstakingly compiled. But events did not go as they had wished, and in 1911 the Society’s journal published a polite but decisive review of *An Adventure* which maintained that their research had obviously led Moberly and Jourdain to unconsciously embellish their tale, while the scenes they witnessed that day at Versailles were not in themselves enough to suggest anything out of the ordinary. Adamant that they really had entered into the mind of Marie Antoinette, Moberly and Jourdain put together a long list of statements from people (many of them well-known churchmen and academics) who affirmed that the story they had been told in 1901 remained unchanged since research had commenced, and was the same as that published in *An Adventure*. The book continued to sell (11,000 copies by 1913), and ran into five editions, the last of which was published by Faber and Faber in 1955. Annie Moberly and Eleanor Jourdain stood by their story for the rest of their lives.¹⁰

Whereas a number of Moberly and Jourdain’s contemporaries and colleagues had taken their account of their “Adventure” seriously, later historians and members of St Hugh’s viewed it as a sign of their mental instability and/or sexual frustration, and attempted to distance the college’s reputation as a pioneering establishment of women’s education from this rather odd tale. Lucille Iremonger, a former St Hugh’s student, published the most comprehensive and

probably best-known history, *The Ghosts of Versailles: Miss Moberly and Miss Jourdain and Their Adventure* (1957), in which she insinuated that the two women were lesbians, with ‘unhealthy’ feelings for each other and their students and implied a connection between this supposed sexual deviancy and their overactive imaginations.¹¹ A.J.P. Taylor, one of the most eminent and well-known historians at the time, reviewed Iremonger’s book and concluded that the “Adventure” was nothing more than “inflated fantasy by two elderly governesses”.¹² As late as 1980, the academic staff at St Hugh’s was still somewhat uncomfortable with Moberly and Jourdain’s story. Colin Matthew, a Fellow and Tutor in Modern History at St Hugh’s from 1978 to 1999, recalled how in the summer of that year he had visited Versailles with his family and come across some people filming an advertisement for ice cream, which involved actors dressed in eighteenth-century costume. He took a snapshot of this scene and posted it up on the notice board in the SCR with the caption, ‘so they weren’t potty after all’. Other tutors, however, did not find this remotely amusing and Matthew, still a relatively new member of staff, was taken aside and quietly rebuked.¹³ In 1994, the literary critic Terry Castle acknowledged that she was ‘at some risk... of exciting readers’ mirth’ in choosing to discuss of *An Adventure* in an academic publication. Her sympathetic and insightful study was alert to the misogyny and homophobia that had underpinned some previous historians’ characterisations of Moberly and Jourdain as “eccentric spinsters... caught up in a flight of fancy”. Yet Castle nevertheless tried out her own “psychological explanation” to account for Moberly and Jourdain’s experiences, suggesting that this may have been a case of *folie à deux* – a kind of shared hallucination identified as a clinical condition by a number of nineteenth and twentieth century psychiatrists frequently attributed to “homosexual bonds” between two women. Although Castle concluded that such a theory rested on problematic epistemological foundations, she nevertheless assumed that some explanation other than that given by Moberly and Jourdain must be sought.¹⁴ In this article I take a different approach, seeking to historicise

rather than dismiss, pathologise or psychoanalyse *An Adventure*. Following a recent turn in both religious history and histories of the occult, I do not look for external explanations for Moberly and Jourdain's claim that they entered into 'an act of memory' by Marie Antoinette that transported them back to 1792, but accept it on its own terms. An attempt to historicise rather than explain away their experiences, also draws attention to an aspect of their story and it's telling that previous studies have neglected – the fact that, although Moberly and Jourdain's "Adventure" provoked sceptical responses, it was also accepted as credible by a large number of their acquaintances and colleagues, making it reasonable to speculate that at least a portion of the 11,000 or so people who purchased copies of their book in the first two years of publication also took it seriously.

1. Enchanted Modernity and *An Adventure*

Recent scholarship rethinking the relationship between modernity and enchantment offers one useful framework for historicising *An Adventure* and understanding why Moberly and Jourdain stood by their story, why Frederick Macmillan deemed it credible enough to publish, and why a number of their Oxford colleagues accepted their account. The events surrounding Moberly and Jourdain's "Adventure" unfolded in the first decade of the twentieth century, in a historical moment often characterized as quintessentially "modern" – the beginning of an era lit up by electricity, driven by the motor car, and defined by struggles for democracy, women's emancipation and political ideologies that pronounced the death of God. "Modernity" has always been a contested, multisided and ambiguous concept, yet is commonly used to signal a set of historical processes occurring in the West in the late nineteenth and twentieth century; including, but not limited to, the emergence of the autonomous and rational subject, the rise of liberal and democratic states, industrialisation, urbanisation, scientism and, especially, secularisation and "disenchantment".¹⁵ In 1917, German sociologist Max Weber famously

declared that the “fate of our times is characterised by rationalisation and intellectualisation and, above all, by the “disenchantment of the world”. The culmination of a process, he argued, that had begun with the Enlightenment whereby an older view of the universe as driven by “mysterious incalculable forces”, whether divine or magical, had given way to a belief that all things could be explained according to intellectual, scientific and rational criteria.¹⁶ The idea that disenchantment was a key characteristic of the modern age dominated Western thought for most of the twentieth century.¹⁷ According to this view, Moberly and Jourdain’s belief that they had entered into an act of memory by Marie Antoinette and been transported backwards in time appears wholly incongruous with the omnibuses, commercial tourism and women’s higher education that furnished their everyday existence. The persistence of “enchanted” beliefs in the modern era could be understood only as an anachronism, a leftover from a more superstitious age, and associated with “groups traditionally cast as inferior within the discourse of Western elites: ‘primitives’, children, women, and the lower classes.”¹⁸

Since the 1990s, however, scholars have grown increasingly critical of accounts of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as the moment in which science and rationalism displaced once and for all religion and superstition as the dominant paradigms structuring society and selfhood. Many historians have argued that religion remained influential in British society well into the twentieth-century, and emphasised the resilience and adaptability of established religions and the emergence of new forms of spirituality.¹⁹ Others have turned their attention to the history of Spiritualism, esoteric religions such as Theosophy, and occult organisations such as the Society of the Golden Dawn that emerged and gained popularity in Victorian and Edwardian Britain, coexisting with and sometimes complementing scientific and rational modes of thought that were previously deemed to signal the end of enchantment.²⁰ Much of this scholarship has thus entailed a reconfiguration of the relationship between modernity and enchantment. Alex Owen’s *The Place of Enchantment* (2004), in particular,

mounted “a challenge to... our traditional understanding of modern culture as characterised by a strictly secular-scientific outlook”. Owen argued that the *fin de siècle* occult or “mystical revival” should not be understood simply as a symptomatic reaction against an otherwise dominant and inevitable process of religious decline, not as running counter to modernity but as constituent of it. *Fin de siècle* occultism was “committed to the guiding principle of reason and played to a formalised concept of rationality even as it contested a strictly secular rationalism”, and it should not, therefore, “be written off as a retrogressive throwback or fringe aberration... But instead must be understood as integral to the shaping of the new at the turn-of-the-century.”²¹

This reconfigured relationship between enchantment and modernity is better able to make sense of Moberly and Jourdain’s “Adventure” and its apparent incongruity with their lives as “modern” women. Their belief that they had entered into an act of memory that transported them back to 1792 was not, strictly speaking, “occult” (usually understood as “the study of... a hidden or veiled reality and the arcane secrets of existence”) but it does fall within the remit of “mysticism” (“an immediate experience of and oneness with variously conceived divinity”), and these terms were often used interchangeably to describe the diverse range of practices and beliefs that made up the *fin de siècle* occult revival.²² Moberly and Jourdain were not, as later historians and members of St Hugh’s might have it, ‘potty’, but highly educated professionals, remembered by their students and colleagues as “stern”, “reticent” and unsentimental.²³ Jourdain was one of the first generation of women to attend university; reading for an undergraduate degree at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, and obtaining a doctorate from the University of Paris. Before coming to St Hugh’s she had a successful career as the headmistress of two girls’ schools and was an experienced administrator and teacher. Annie Moberly was almost 20 years older than Jourdain and had not benefited from a university education, but she could read Hebrew and Greek and was the author of two published theological works.²⁴ Both

women were financially independent, having to work to support themselves, and were therefore committed to building up St Hugh's to ensure that the next generation of women would be capable of earning their own living as skilled and well-paid professionals. They also supported campaigns for women to be granted degrees on an equal basis to men, and the struggle for the parliamentary vote.²⁵ The manner in which Moberly and Jourdain investigated and recounted the incidents at Versailles reflected the scholarly rigour of the academic environment in which they worked, especially Jourdain's undergraduate training in history. Not only did they undertake archival research to provide factual evidence in support of their hypothesis, they also kept careful records of their own experiences and their findings, all of which were eventually deposited in the Bodleian Library. One of their supporters encouraged them to publish their manuscript "as the accumulation of facts may help the science of the future... To make for the increase of true knowledge."²⁶ Moberly and Jourdain followed this advice, taking seriously their duties as seekers of truth and preserving their discoveries in the hope that they would be of use to future researchers. "We record these things," they wrote in the preface to the 1924 edition of *An Adventure*, "in order that they may be considered whenever the time shall come when a true explanation for story may become possible."²⁷ They therefore resemble in many ways the subjects of Alex Owen's *The Place of Enchantment* – respectable, "modern", and highly educated – especially in their thwarted desire for *An Adventure* to be verified by the "scientific" criteria deployed by the SPR.

2. The Church of England and the Occult

Histories of the occult revival, however, provide only a partial view of the historical conditions under which the events surrounding *An Adventure* unfolded. Just as important to Moberly and Jourdain as their commitment to scholarly rigour and their interest in contributing to the "science of the future", was their devotion to High Church Anglicanism. The case of *An*

Adventure also, therefore, needs to be examined in light of historiography on the Church of England and the degree to which so-called “orthodox” Christianity was intertwined and to some degree reconciled with Spiritualist and, what might be deemed, “magical” belief systems. Like the scholarship discussed in Section 1, this historiography also emphasises the blurring of boundaries between the scientific and the sacred, and the rational and the irrational. An analysis of Moberly and Jourdain’s “Adventure”, however, brings these two historiographies into dialogue, further emphasising the relative fluidity of categories such as “orthodox” and “heterodox” in this period.

Annie Moberly’s father had been the Bishop of Salisbury, a close friend of the leading Tractarian Churchmen John Keble who preached a form of Anglo-Catholicism that remained loyal to the Church of England after many leading figures in the Oxford Movement had gone over to Rome.²⁸ Moberly remained fiercely loyal to her family and their religious principles, and it was largely her religious background and commitments which recommended her to the post of Principal of St Hugh’s. This college was founded as an explicitly Church of England establishment with the intention of recruiting students from less well-off clergy families who might otherwise be compelled to send them to non-sectarian places of education. Eleanor Jourdain was also the daughter of a, far more impoverished, clergyman, but although her background was not as grand as Moberly’s it was no less respectable. Both women were ideally placed to preside over an institution that advertised itself as being for Church of England students, that excluded non-Anglicans from its Council until 1910, that reserved its first scholarships for Church of England women, and where Sunday evening Bible classes and lectures were compulsory for both students and tutors.²⁹

Annie Moberly later described the religious feeling with which she grew up as “the self-controlled vivacity of high spiritual existence...” Theology was not a set of abstract principles or dry doctrines, but a “thrilling interest” whereby one’s every movement, speech

and thought was imbued with a sense of “un-seen presences”.³⁰ Such an account reminds us that even religious experiences contained within the orthodoxies of the State Church were not incompatible with belief in spirits or “un-seen presences”, which it was for God, not man, to comprehend. Indeed, Moberly’s family memoir, published the same year as *An Adventure*, included a number of mysterious tales. It described how a neighbour had seen one of Moberly’s dead sisters standing by her family in Church, and how a little boy caught in the wheels of a coach and horses was rescued by an angel who placed him safely on the other side of the road. Given that the general style of *Dulce Domum* is dry and discrete, with most of the interesting anecdotes having been removed at the request of relatives, such stories stand out all the more for their strangeness.³¹ Annie Moberly also recorded a conversation between her father and his Dean at Salisbury, in which Bishop Moberly, when asked if he believed in the dead appearing to their friends, said that while he was not inclined to have to affirm his belief for this or that ghost story, he by no means ruled out the possibility of such occurrences. “No doubt,” he declared, “...they keep alive in our hearts a great consciousness of a mysterious and supernatural world” in which man could never know the full extent of God’s work.³² Eleanor Jourdain did not leave a memoir or autobiography, nor any published works discussing her religious beliefs. There is some evidence that she believed her psychic powers to extend beyond the few encounters at Versailles described in *An Adventure*. The final pages of her diary for 1901 contain scribbled, barely decipherable, notes referring to premonitions of the death of acquaintances and an account of Annie Moberly coming to her in a dream to convey an important piece of information.³³ Many of her students also recalled that Jourdain was ‘commonly supposed to possess second sight’.³⁴

Historians have only recently begun to attend to the extent to which spiritualist and supernatural beliefs influenced, entered into and were implicated within the so-called “orthodox” theology of the Church of England. Sarah Williams showed how, in a working-

class South London community, “magical” and folkloric “superstitions” coexisted with more formal Christian belief systems.³⁵ Georgina Byrne identified numerous, often prominent, Anglicans with a strong interest in the supernatural, focusing mainly on Spiritualism and the belief that it was possible for the bereaved to communicate with loved ones who had passed over to the afterlife. Although the Church of England did not provide an “official” response to Spiritualism until 1920 (when it was briefly discussed as a “grave danger”) and 1937-1939 (when the Archbishop of Canterbury established a committee to investigate it but failed to publish the resulting majority report which supported the hypothesis that it was possible to communicate with “disincarnate spirits”...), Byrne showed that Spiritualism featured in numerous sermons, Church pamphlets, newspapers and journals. Many clergy, including the 1920 Lambeth conference, believed that supernatural occurrences were worthy of serious scientific investigation in order to establish their credibility. Byrne paid special attention to the Society for Psychical Research, identifying numerous Church of England clergy among its membership.³⁶ Alex Owen identified quasi-Christian iterations of the *fin de siècle* occult revival, which drew upon mediaeval and Renaissance Christian mysticism as well as nonliteral and symbolic interpretation of Scripture that, following the publication of *Lux Mundi* in 1889, regained popularity within the high church milieu occupied by the founders of St Hugh’s College.³⁷

Whereas Alex Owen’s work implies a fairly clear distinction between the “Esoteric Christianity” of the occult revival on the one hand, and “religious orthodoxy” on the other, the case of *An Adventure* suggests that this should not be overdetermined.³⁸ Joan Evans, who was already a long-standing family friend of Jourdain when she matriculated at St Hugh’s in 1914, described the Vice Principal as both “unquestioningly orthodox” in her Anglican faith *and* as interested more in “the history of mysticism than theology...”³⁹ Moberly and Jourdain were not unusual in combining Anglicanism with mysticism and/or occult beliefs. The “incidents”

at Versailles appear to have been warmly, or at least unquestioningly, received by many equally devout Anglicans in their social circle. When Moberly and Jourdain asked for written statements of support from various friends, testifying that they had been told the story of the trip to Versailles, complete in all its detail, long before they had undertaken any research which might have unconsciously embellished their memories, a number of similarly respectable and orthodox Anglicans came forward. Miss M.E. Hamilton, for example, was the daughter of Mr Edward Hamilton, MP for Salisbury, and niece of Bishop Walter K. Hamilton, Bishop of Salisbury; Elizabeth M. Church was married to the Rev Charles Marcus Church, Canon of Wells Cathedral and Principal of Wells Theological College; and the friend who advised Moberly and Jourdain to publish their book in order to “help the science of the future” was also a churchman, the Rev J.R. Illingworth.⁴⁰ Some of these statements only briefly confirm that their authors recall the story of Versailles being told to them, without indicating whether or not they believed it, while others, such as Illingworth’s, offer enthusiastic endorsement of the supernatural substance of Moberly and Jourdain’s experience. At the very least, the two women’s willingness to speak openly about their “Adventure”, and the fact that there is no evidence to suggest that their professionalism was ever called into question as a result, suggests that a belief in the possibility of entering into the memory of a long dead queen was acceptable to the middle and upper-class Anglicans of early twentieth-century Oxford.

Science, Gender and the Occult

An Adventure received a far less enthusiastic reception, however, from the Society for Psychical Research (SPR). Founded and presided over by Cambridge academics, the SPR had over 900 members by 1895, and supporters included the future Conservative Prime Minister Arthur J. Balfour, the author Arthur Conan Doyle, and the physicist Oliver Lodge. It was, therefore, the pre-eminent authority capable of endorsing, validating and verifying *An*

Adventure.⁴¹ Moberly and Jourdain had tentatively contacted the SPR in 1902, only to be told that there was not enough evidence to warrant further investigation.⁴² In 1911, however, having received a copy of the book from Macmillan's publishing house, the SPR proved more willing. Alice Johnson, secretary of the SPR, wrote to Moberly in February 1911 requesting that they meet to discuss it further. "It is," wrote Johnson, "a very interesting case and it is very satisfactory that you have been able to collect so much information about it."⁴³ Five days later the two women took tea together, but the meeting did not go as Moberly had hoped.

In Moberly's account of events, "Miss Johnson" had already decided her view of the matter. "She said at once that the personages we met were certainly all real men and women and of no importance at all", thus dismissing Moberly and Jourdain's identification of the various historical figures they believed to have encountered that August afternoon in Versailles. Johnson remained interested, however, in the "change of scenery" witnessed (with its close resemblance to the Versailles of 1792 rather than the topography of the present-day Palace gardens), although she immediately began quibbling over details. Alice Johnson had her own theory as to what happened in Versailles that afternoon, suggesting that Moberly and Jourdain had been affected by "subliminal memory of history" and thus imposed their historical knowledge of what Versailles should have looked like in 1792 onto their memories of that day. In a subsequent and, what Moberly described as, "extremely disagreeable" interview at the Ladies University Club in London, Alice Johnson intimated that Moberly and Jourdain had revised and added details to their initial accounts of their "Adventure" following their archival research. She asked to speak to Moberly's siblings, whom Moberly claimed had heard the full account, complete with details, in 1901, prior to any research having been undertaken. Moberly informed Alice Johnson that she could not interview the siblings as they were now all dead, to which Johnson "ejaculated with great dryness of voice 'very unfortunate'." "Then I left the Club," recounted Moberly, "wondering at the rudeness and the apparent incapacity to arrive at

any fresh fact apart from her perceived opinion.” A few weeks later, “without any further enquiry of any kind” Moberly received “a formal letter from the SPR saying that their investigations failed to substantiate the case.”⁴⁴

This was not the end of the matter, however, because in June that year a review of *An Adventure* was published in the *Proceedings of the Society of Psychical Research*. It noted that the book has been “widely read and has made considerable sensation”. Nevertheless, the reviewer pronounced quite definitely that the SPR did not think that there is “sufficient ground for supposing anything supernatural to have occurred at all.” Following a thorough investigation, the SPR determined that Moberly and Jourdain’s sightings of Marie Antoinette and various other supposedly historical figures had been embellished by memory “after the idea of haunting had occurred to them... With some additional details of costume suitable to the times of Marie Antoinette...” Moreover, the review dismissed the “uncanny”, “eerie” and oppressive atmosphere that both women felt so strongly that afternoon at Versailles, as nothing more than the effects of fatigue. The conclusion to the review was crisp, polite but unyielding: “while gladly admitting that Miss Morison and Miss Lamont [Moberly and Jourdain’s pen names] have produced a very readable book and have taken praiseworthy trouble in looking up historical facts and traditions, we cannot honestly say that they appear to have added anything of interest on the positive side of Psychical Research.”⁴⁵

How to account for the SPR’s response to Moberly and Jourdain’s “Adventure”? Contextualising the case within scholarship pointing to the prevalence of belief in mysticism and the occult, even among adherents of the Church of England, helps to rule out the most reductive explanations – that Moberly and Jourdain were “potty” and everyone thought them so – but nor does it present an obvious answer. As this article has demonstrated, it was not unusual or illegitimate for either educated professional women or adherents of the Anglican faith to believe it possible to be transported back in time. The SPR occupied a very similar

social milieu to that of Moberly and Jourdain, including many “orthodox” Anglicans and Oxbridge academics, and although it sought scientific validation of supernatural occurrences, it began from the premise of their possibility. Furthermore, Moberly and Jourdain were as keen as the SPR to apply rational, evidence-based criteria for establishing truth. The reason for the SPR rejecting the claims of *An Adventure* are not, therefore, immediately obvious for there was no clear “scientific” criteria that Moberly and Jourdain failed to meet.

The SPR carefully assessed the evidence, as they did with all cases deemed worthy of consideration. Could Moberly and Jourdain prove that all the details clearly dating their sightings at Versailles to have been from the year 1792, had truly been witnessed at the time (and reported immediately to their friends and colleagues), rather than added to the account following their historical research which might have led them to unconsciously embellish their recollections?⁴⁶ The SPR concluded the answer in the negative – rejecting not the premise of the supernatural experiences but the mode of proof; resting their case not on a scientific discourse inherently opposed to supernatural possibilities, but on the ability of believers to make a case of fact. In responding to the scepticism of the SPR, Moberly and Jourdain relied upon a very similar intellectual framework – legalistic, rational and methodical. In fact, Moberly accused the SPR investigation of failing to live up to its own standards of research and the duties expected of a “public Body [sic]”. She complained that Alice Johnson had failed to interview Jourdain before dismissing the case, and was reluctant to examine the research papers and testimonies with which Moberly presented her. She even wrote to Alice Johnson in April 1911, systematically replying to the queries Johnson had raised and asserting, in reference to their previous meeting, that “I... came away feeling that no evidence could make a difference where the case was so evidently pre-judged.”⁴⁷ Annie Moberly read and annotated all reviews of *An Adventure*, methodically working through any criticisms and noting the counter-evidence in the margins. The damning review in the *Proceedings of the Society of Psychical Research*

is one of the most heavily annotated. Moberly picked up on every minor and trivial error committed by the reviewer: “Not true” she wrote next to the reviewer’s brief reference to the afternoon in Versailles as a “hot” day spent sightseeing (Moberly and Jourdain had stated very clearly that it had been a cool, cloudy day despite the season).⁴⁸ Her conclusion that the review was “too nonsensical to answer”, once again relied upon standards of “sense” and reason which Moberly deemed the SPR failed to meet. Despite the avowedly rational basis of such protestations, the SPR refused to accept that anything out of the ordinary had occurred that August afternoon in Versailles.

The finality of the SPR’s decision, and the fact that one rational framework ultimately trumped another apparently equally reasoned argument, begs the question to what extent the gender of the authors affected the reception of *An Adventure*? The fields of science, religion and the supernatural, and the various struggles for cultural authority that played out upon them, were fundamentally gendered. Certain forms of religion (particularly its more “enthusiastic”, emotive, or “superstitious” manifestations) had long been gendered feminine.⁴⁹ And in the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Spiritualism and other supernatural experiences were similarly described, and often dismissed, in highly gendered terms – as a result of a surfeit of emotion, mental instability, lack of self-control and intellectual naïveté.⁵⁰ The main aim of the SPR, on the other hand, was to rehabilitate supernatural phenomena as legitimate subjects for “serious”, “objective” research conducted by educated, professional and “expert” investigators. Tales told by two spinsters, whose visions could be dismissed as mere feminine superstition or overactive imaginations brought about by sexual frustration, might have been viewed as damaging to the SPR’s decidedly masculine endeavour. A few of the reviews take a patronising tone. Anthropologist and folklorist Andrew Lang, for example, in an otherwise sympathetic review in the *Morning Post*, described their “little book” as having “set tongues wagging”, as if all the attention their publication had garnered was nothing more than feminine gossip.⁵¹

However, unravelling the gendered dynamics of Annie Moberly and Eleanor Jourdain's encounter with the SPR is made more complicated by the fact that all their direct contact with the society was via its female officers. These women confidently asserted their expertise and authority in terms that were often gendered male. SPR secretary Alice Johnson invoked "her vast experience of examining evidence" when dismissing Moberly's protestations at Johnson's theory that the "Adventure" could be explained by "subliminal memory of history".⁵² Such assertions on the part of Johnson were given considerable weight by the fact that she had undertaken embryological research in the Cambridge University Morphological Laboratory in the early 1880s and been the Director of the Balfour Laboratory at Newnham College, Cambridge from 1884 to 1890.⁵³ Moreover, the wholly unsentimental and unapologetic review of *An Adventure* in the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, was not the work of a male pen, but was published anonymously by Eleanor Sidgwick, née Balfour, wife of Henry Sidgwick and President of the SPR from 1908 to 1909. Eleanor Sidgwick, like Moberly and Jourdain, was Principal of an Oxbridge women's college (Newnham, from 1892 to 1910, where she also taught mathematics), though she came from an aristocratic and far wealthier family than either of these two women, and was in possession of an independent income.⁵⁴ The striking fact of the two sides in the SPR dispute being represented by women in such similar professional positions, prevents characterising it simply as a case of the male scientific establishment refusing to recognize the experiences of women.

In fact, and in spite of the SPR's eventual rebuttal, the Society dedicated considerable time and resources to their investigation of *An Adventure*, which suggests that Moberly and Jourdain's claims were initially taken seriously. Possibly Moberly was correct in her belief that Alice Johnson came away from their first meeting having already decided that the "Adventure" was not the result of supernatural causes. In Johnson's account of this meeting (undated but seemingly written shortly afterwards) she comments at the end that "It appears to me that the

story has actually grown in Miss Moberly's mind since the book was written...", suggesting that Moberly's "confidence in the infallibility of her memory" made her to open to suggestions of supernatural occurrences.⁵⁵ However, this is the only hint of a personal opinion put forward in papers referring to *An Adventure* in the SPR archive. All other discussion of it is scrupulously polite and primarily factual. There is no suggestion that the SPR was dismissive or cynical about Moberly and Jourdain's claims in private. In fact, the SPR took pains to at least demonstrate that they had carried out a thorough investigation before reaching any conclusion. Eminent physicist and SPR member Oliver Lodge published a letter in the *Church Family Newspaper* in March 1911, while the investigation was still ongoing. According to him, Moberly and Jourdain's experiences were part of "a definite group of phenomena", these being "impressions of past events and obsolete arrangements in association with places", "which require further explanation". At present he remained open-minded about the outcome of the SPR's investigation: "whether this incident will turn out to be a clear example of such an impression, or whether it will transpire that the close correspondence between past reality and present perception have been unconsciously improved... It would be premature at present for me to even make a conjecture."⁵⁶ Eleanor Sidgwick's review reminded readers that the SPR secretary had interviewed one of the authors of the book not once but twice, also that the SPR sent a "friend" to Versailles, a Monsieur Sage who lived in Paris, to walk over some of the routes described in *An Adventure* and assess the claims made about the change in scenery.⁵⁷ Beyond the SPR, even the rather patronising Andrew Lang had corresponded with Moberly prior to the publication of his review, drawing her attention to an "analogous adventure" and suggesting that, although he agreed with most of the SPR's review, he felt some points of Moberly's case had been unfairly overlooked.⁵⁸

Rather than indicate a clear division between masculine science and feminine superstition, the gender politics of *An Adventure* instead encapsulate some of the flux of this quintessentially

modern moment, when women were beginning to enter the public sphere but when their place within it was far from secure. In the first decade of the twentieth century, women were able to attend university, to earn a salary as Oxbridge dons, to publish works on history, theology and mathematics and to speak with some degree of authority in male-dominated cultural arenas.⁵⁹ Annie Moberly and Eleanor Jourdain's disagreement with Alice Johnson and Eleanor Sidgwick was not decided by the gender of the individuals involved so much as their ability to successfully infiltrate and appropriate masculine-gendered discourses of science and reason. Eleanor Sidgwick was somewhat more successful at this than Moberly, but Moberly and Jourdain were able to wield more intellectual authority than their mother's generation and were certainly not dismissed (at least not at the time) as deluded old spinsters or charlatans. It is, in fact, significant that they were never accused of making the story up. Their character was never in question, only whether the experience they described could be construed as supernatural. Oliver Lodge declared that "everyone who reads the book called *An Adventure* must be impressed with the earnestness and sincerity of the ladies who had this strange experience..."⁶⁰

Class was also an important factor in ensuring that Moberly and Jourdain were taken seriously as women.⁶¹ As Oliver Lodge's insistence upon their honesty demonstrates, they comfortably fell into the category of "ladies" rather than "women". Andrew Lang's review agreed with Eleanor Sidgwick's in accepting that some aspects of *An Adventure* may have been shaped by tricks of memory, but he refused to believe that Moberly and Jourdain's recollections of the costumes of the people they met at Versailles could have been affected in this way: "such amazing areas of memory occurring to *two* educated ladies of the highest character, really do not seem possible."⁶² This points to another important element of the gendered position of Moberly and Jourdain: being of the "highest character", unbesmirched by any hint of sexual impropriety and impeccably orthodox in their religious allegiances, they were protected from accusations of dishonesty, greed or insanity that could be levelled at lower-class women

dabbling in the supernatural, and at women whose sexual and religious practices were less traditional.⁶³ This also highlights shifting attitudes to what might now be termed “lesbian” relationships and/or close female companionship. Historians have suggested that in the nineteenth century women were able to have “romantic friendships” with other women, sometimes living together in “female marriages”, without necessarily being defined as deviant. By the early twentieth century, however, with the rise of sexology and more public discussions of female to female sexual passion, such relationships were viewed with far greater suspicion. Although this remains the subject of historiographical debate, this thesis appears to have been borne out in the case of Moberly and Jourdain, since the salacious and stigmatising implications of lesbianism in Iremonger’s 1957 book are not apparent in the discussions of *An Adventure* at the time of its publication.⁶⁴

Yet the way in which Annie Moberly and Eleanor Jourdain were positioned in the debates generated by *An Adventure*, also reminds us that the moment of modernity in which they lived placed women on the cusp, rather than securely at the centre, of the male public sphere. As a result, what cultural authority they did manage to exert was always fragile and had to be carefully shored up. In particular, they were keen to distinguish their own supernatural experiences from those they perceived to be less legitimate. “Both of us have inherited a horror of all forms of occultism” Moberly and Jourdain assured their readers in the first edition of *An Adventure* – an inheritance from their upstanding and religiously orthodox families whom they were also keen to invoke: “We belong to no new schools of thought: we are the daughters of English clergyman, and heartily hold and teach the faith of our fathers”. The combination of class, religious legitimacy and Englishness was crucial, and evident when Moberly and Jourdain asserted that not only did they have “the deepest distrust” in most stories of abnormal appearances but also “the deepest distaste” for them.⁶⁵ When Eleanor Jourdain died,

unexpectedly, in 1924, Annie Moberly even thought to write such a defence into her friend's obituary.

It was a trial ... to be considered "occult" in anyway; for such objects as Spiritualism, crystal gazing, planchette, automatic writing, etc. were profoundly disliked and distrusted... But on the other hand she knew there was much in the world that was mysterious and unknown, and when an incident could bear the minute historical examination that was given to this experience, being essentially honest and brave, she was not afraid of facing the fact.⁶⁶

Such assertions were somewhat disingenuous. As this article has shown, the distance between the world of middle-class Anglican orthodoxy and the occult, Christian mysticism and Spiritualism was not as great as Moberly and Jourdain wished to suggest. Although they claimed to "belong to no new schools of thought" they had both taken an interest in "Eastern" religions in the 1880s, a craze that formed an important aspect of the occult revival.⁶⁷ And when a review of *An Adventure* appeared in the *Occult Review*, they wrote to the publication asking to be introduced to "the persons mentioned in it who seem to have shared some of our experiences".⁶⁸ Moreover, Moberly's letters to her publisher Frederick Macmillan suggest that the social class of the believer was as important as the nature of the belief system itself, when determining whether to associate with other people interested in the supernatural. Moberly wrote that although she didn't mind her and Jourdain's authorship of *An Adventure* becoming known to their acquaintances in Oxford, she did not want their names printed in newspapers for fear of receiving "numerous letters of irresponsible persons". When Moberly and Jourdain encountered parties of tourists visiting Versailles, carrying copies of their book and keen to re-trace the route of their "Adventure", Moberly scoffed at their "inaccurate and loudly expressed

opinions”, and also hesitated to allow a French translation of the book for “as long as it has to be read in English it can only come into the hands of a small number of educated people”.⁶⁹ Yet even if the distinctions Moberly and Jourdain wish to draw between legitimate and illegitimate belief systems appear largely relative, it is important to acknowledge the desire to draw them at all. Emphasising the fluidity of boundaries between the occult and the scientific, the orthodox and the unorthodox, is not to downplay the degree to which people at the time had to carefully negotiate these shifting categories and their meanings within cultural and social hierarchies.

While Moberly and Jourdain’s “Adventure” sheds light upon the gendered and class dynamics which structured the relationship between science and the occult in the early twentieth century, no definitive explanation for the SPR’s decision emerges. Historians of the SPR have noted that by the beginning of the twentieth century the organisation was increasingly keen to disassociate itself from “vulgar” Spiritualism, while the gulf between the hard sciences and so-called “pseudo-sciences” was widening. As early as the 1880s, Eleanor Sidgwick’s uncompromising attacks on what she believed to be fraudulent claims to supernatural powers, had led to the resignation of many prominent Spiritualist from the SPR.⁷⁰ Although Moberly and Jourdain’s claim to have encountered “some curious” conditions at Versailles was deliberately pitched at a very different tone from the popular Spiritualist movement, and although they more than adequately met the SPR’s criteria for “educated” and respectable witnesses, perhaps they simply fell foul of Sidgwick and Johnson’s rigorous standards of proof. And, speculating further, perhaps the SPR’s female officers felt an even greater onus to be scrupulous when investigating a case put forward by other women who, like them, were striving for acceptance within the Oxbridge academy.

Conclusion

This article has used the case of Moberly and Jourdain's "Adventure" to illuminate and develop recent historiography on the relationship between science, the occult and Christianity at the turn of the twentieth century. It suggests that Moberly and Jourdain's encounter with the Society for Psychical Research illustrates in many ways the enchanted modernity argued for by scholars such as Alex Owen, in which the boundaries between the scientific and the rational, and the occult and the superstitious became blurred. Moberly and Jourdain sought to investigate, account for and indeed defend their supernatural experiences on the grounds of scholarly historical research, and a methodical laying out of the facts. They made their story public out of a desire to both receive validation from and contribute to the "psychical science" of the future. Yet the case of *An Adventure* also extends the insights of some of this scholarship on the relationship between modernity and enchantment, which tends to focus on occult belief systems, to an examination of a far more orthodox Anglican context. In doing so, it contributes to recent work on the Church of England's attitudes to the supernatural in twentieth-century Britain, showing that certain kinds of supernatural experiences were consistent with a devout adherence to, in this case, High Church Anglicanism.

At the same time, the article insists that historians need to remain alert to the importance that people at the time placed upon distinguishing between acceptable supernatural beliefs, and those which were vulgar, dangerous or wrong. While the article situates itself within a post-secular scholarly turn, which recognizes the inadequacy of binary distinctions when it comes to thinking about the relationship between the occult, modern Britain and "orthodox" Christianity, it also suggests that although these definitions were by no means fixed or coherent, binary divisions remained important to early twentieth-century women and men, with gender and class playing an important role in how they were policed. In taking up the insights of scholars such as Alex Owen, we must be careful to avoid characterising the turn-of-the-century as a period of religious, intellectual and philosophical "free for all" in which pre-existing and

carefully delineated theological and ideological frameworks were simply collapsed into one another. In fact, what the reception of *An Adventure* – and especially its refutation by the SPR – points to, is the continued importance of reinforcing boundaries between “legitimate” and “illegitimate” supernatural occurrences, and how the ability to determine this depended upon cultural authority that was shaped by gender and class.

¹ For the history of St Hugh's College, see Laura Schwartz, *A Serious Endeavour: Gender, Education and Community at St Hugh's, 1886-2011* (London, 2011).

² Eleanor Jourdain and Charlotte Anne Elizabeth Moberly, *An Adventure* (5 edn.; London, 1955 (1911)). This edition is referred to throughout, as the main text is a reproduction of the 1911 first edition. Moberly's full name was Charlotte Anne Elizabeth.

³ Annie Moberly to Frederick Macmillan, 15 March 1911, Reading: University of Reading Special Collections (hereafter University of Reading), MAC MOB 220/293, Joan Evans, 'Editor's Preface', *An Adventure* (5th edn.; London, 1955), p.20.

⁴ Edith Olivier, 'Preface', *An Adventure* (4th edn.; London, 1948), 9-28, p.9, Priscilla West, 'Reminiscences of Seven Decades', in Penny Griffin (ed.), *St Hugh's: 100 Years of Women's Education* (Basingstoke, 1986), 62-243, p.65.

⁵ Winnifred M. Mammat, May 1911, 'An Adventure: Typewritten Correspondence and Statements', pp.13-14, Oxford: Bodleian Library (hereafter Bodleian), MS. misc. d. 249.

⁶ Mrs Graham Balfour, March 1911, 'An Adventure: Typewritten Correspondence and Statements', pp.21-3, Bodleian, MS. misc. d. 249.

⁷ Helen Deneke, 8 May 1911, 'An Adventure: Typewritten Correspondence and Statements', pp.40-2, Bodleian, MS. misc. d. 249.

⁸ Helen Deneke, 'Memoir', pp.45-7, Oxford: St Hugh's College Archive (hereafter St Hugh's Archive), I.16.

⁹ Aims of SPR quoted in Renee Haynes, *History of the Society for Psychical Research, 1882-1982* (London, 1982), p. xiii. See also Ruth Brandon, *The Spiritualists: The Passion for the Occult in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London, 1983); John Cerullo, *The Secularisation of the Soul: Psychical Research in Modern Britain* (Philadelphia, 1982); Janet Oppenheim, *The Other World: Spiritualism and Psychical Research in England, 1850-1914* (Cambridge, 1985); Roger Luckhurst, *The Invention of Telepathy, 1870-1901* (Oxford, 2002).

¹⁰ Subsequent studies of the "Adventure", disputing its claims, include J.R. Sturge-Whiting, *The Mystery of Versailles* (London, 1938); David Landale Johnston, *Trianon Case, a Review of the Evidence* (Ilfracombe, 1945); W.H. Salter, "'An Adventure': A Note on the Evidence", *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 35 (Jan-Feb 1950), 178-187.

¹¹ Iremonger, *The Ghosts of Versailles* (London, 1957), pp.22-23, 86-88. It is possible that Moberly and Jourdain were in a sexual, or at least a romantic, relationship with each other, and Eleanor Jourdain subsequently pursued another such relationship with St Hugh's tutor Celia Ady. However, there is a great deal of debate between historians as to whether such relationships should be labelled as 'lesbian', which was a term only just coming into being at the turn-of-the-century, see Schwartz, *A Serious Endeavour*, pp.62-70.

¹² A.J.P. Taylor, 'A Ghost Goes West: The Ghosts of Versailles by Lucille Iremonger', *Observer* 6 Jan 1957, p.8.

¹³ Colin Matthew, 'The Early History of St Hugh's and "The Row"', in Mary Clapinson (ed.), 'St Hugh's College in the 20th Century: a Record of Colloquium Held at the College on 18th of September 1999', Oxford: St Hugh's College Archive.

¹⁴ Terry Castle, 'Contagious Folly: An Adventure and Its Skeptics', in James Chandler, Arnold I. Davidson, and Harry Harootunian (eds), *Questions of Evidence: Proof, Practice, and Persuasion across the Disciplines* (Chicago, 1994), 26-28, 31, 32-42. Also discussed in Terry, Castle, *The Female Thermometer: Eighteenth-Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny* (Oxford, 1995).

¹⁵ Michael Saler, 'Modernity and Enchantment: A Historiographic Review', *The American Historical Review* 3:3 (June 2006), 692-716, p.694; Alex Owen, *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern* (Chicago, 2004), p.9.

¹⁶ Quoted in Owen, *The Place of Enchantment*, p.10. Weber's remarks were initially delivered in a speech at Munich University, subsequently published in H.H. Girth and C. Wright Mills (eds.), *Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York, 1958).

¹⁷ Saler, 'Modernity and Enchantment', p.695. Saler also notes the existence of, what he terms, a Marxist-influenced 'dialectical' approach which posited modernity itself as inherently and hypocritically irrational, but which nevertheless maintained a binary distinction between the rational and the irrational.

¹⁸ Ibid., pp.696-697.

¹⁹ See, for example, Matthew Grimley, Jane Garnett, Alana Harris, William Whyte and Sarah Williams (eds), *Redefining Christian Britain: Post-1945 Perspectives* (London, 2007), Sue Morgan, 'Sex and Common-Sense: Maude Royden, Religion, and Modern Sexuality', *Journal of British Studies*, 52 (2013), 153-78. For an overview

of much of this literature, see Timothy W. Jones, 'Postsecular Sex? Secularisation and Religious Change in the History of Sexuality in Britain', *History Compass*, 11:11 (2013), 918-30. Disenchantment and secularisation are related but not identical processes. Post-Enlightenment currents of Protestantism have been defined as a more 'disenchanted' form of religion than mediaeval Catholicism, in *that* they posited a non-interventionist God whose existence did not necessarily contradict the workings of the natural world. For an overview of critiques and a defence of the orthodox secularisation thesis, see Steve Bruce (ed.), *Religion and Modernisation. Sociologists and Historians Debate the Secularisation Thesis* (Oxford, 1992). More recently, the category of the secular has come in for greater scrutiny and historians have responded to Charles Taylor's call to move beyond characterising secularisation as a "subtraction story", whereby the secular is defined as merely an absence of religion, and begun to examine secularism as an intellectual and moral stance in its own right, Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA & London, 2007), Laura Schwartz, *Infidel Feminism: Secularism, Religion and Women's Emancipation, England 1830-1914* (Manchester, 2013), pp.21-26.

²⁰ See, for example, Alex Owen, *The Darkened Room: Women, Power, and Spiritualism in Late Victorian England* (Chicago, 2004 (first published 1989)), Alison Winter, *Mesmerised: Powers of Mind in Victorian Britain* (Chicago, 1998), Jenny Hazelgrove, *Spiritualism and British Society Between the Wars* (Manchester, 2000), Daniel Pick, *Svengali's Web: The Alien Enchanter in Modern Culture* (New Haven & London, 2000), Luckhurst, *The Invention of Telepathy*, Owen, *The Place of Enchantment*, Alison Butler, *Victorian Occultism and the Making of Modern Magic: Invoking Tradition* (Basingstoke, 2011). For comparative developments in Germany, see Corinna Treitel, *Science for the Soul: Occultism and the Genesis of the German Modern* (Baltimore, 2004). For an overview of much of this literature, see Saler, 'Modernity and Enchantment'.

²¹ Owen, *The Place of Enchantment*, pp.12-15. See also Joy Dixon, 'Modernity, Heterodoxy and the Transformation of Religious Cultures', in Sue Morgan and Jacqueline Devries (eds), *Women, Gender and Religious Cultures in Britain* (London, 2010), 211-30, p. 216.

²² Owen, *The Place of Enchantment*, pp.19-22.

²³ Helen Deneke, 'Memoir', St Hugh's Archive, I.16, p.20; Evans, 'Editor's Preface', p.17.

²⁴ Charlotte Anne Elizabeth Moberly, *The Faith of the Prophets* (London, 1916), Charlotte Anne Elizabeth Moberly, *Five Visions of the Revelation* (2nd edn.; London & Oxford, 1939). See also Edith Olivier's 'Preface' to the 1939 edition, pp.1-3.

²⁵ Schwartz, *A Serious Endeavour*, ch. 1-2, esp. pp. 60-63, 40

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- ²⁶ Rev. J.R. Illingworth, 22 June 1908, 'An Adventure: Typewritten Correspondence and Statements', p.141, Bodleian, MS. misc. d. 249.
- ²⁷ Charlotte Anne Elizabeth Moberly and Eleanor Jourdain, *An Adventure* (5th.; London, 1955), p.28, Annie Moberly to Frederick Macmillan, 29 Oct 1910, 27 Nov 1912, University of Reading, MAC MOB 9/180, 221/124.
- ²⁸ Charlotte Anne Elizabeth Moberly, *Dulce Domum: George Moberly, His Family and Friends* (London, 1911), pp7-8.
- ²⁹ For more detailed account of St Hugh's' Anglican inheritance, see Schwartz, *A Serious Endeavour*, pp.20-35.
- ³⁰ Moberly, *Dulce Domum*, pp.7-8.
- ³¹ Ibid., pp.224-225, 71-72. See also, Edith Olivier, *Four Victorian Ladies of Wiltshire* (London, 1945), p.40, Iremonger, *The Ghosts of Versailles* (London, 1957) ch. 3.
- ³² Moberly, *Dulce Domum*, p.269.
- ³³ 'Eleanor Jourdain's Diary' (1901), Bodleian, MS.Eng.misc.F.73, see also Eleanor Jourdain to Frederick Macmillan, 4 February 1919, University of Reading, MAC JOU 206/183.
- ³⁴ Priscilla West, 'Reminiscences of Seven Decades', p.66. See also Iremonger, *The Ghosts of Versailles*, pp.96-99.
- ³⁵ Sarah Williams' *Religious Belief and Popular Culture in Southwark c.1880-1939* (Oxford, 1999).
- ³⁶ Georgina Byrne, *Modern Spiritualism and the Church of England, 1850-1939* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2010), pp.144-45, 52, 56, 50-51 and.3. See also Oppenheim, *The Other World*, pp.129-30. Hayward also notes, less overt, commonalities between the rise of Spiritualism and contemporaneous developments in the Anglican Church such as biblical exegesis, Rhodri Hayward, *Resisting History: Religious Transcendence and the Invention of the Unconscious* (Manchester, 2007), p.35, 41.
- ³⁷ Owen, *The Place of Enchantment*, p. 21, pp.43-49. Walter Lock, a member of the Lux Mundi group was a member of St Hugh's College Council between 1894 and 1923, while another member, Canon Scott Holland was a family friend of Annie Moberly, *St Hugh's Chronicle* 1933-34, no.6, pp.25-26, St Hugh's Archive, Moberly, *Dulce Domum*, p. 260.
- ³⁸ "Esoteric Christianity" and quasi-Christian mysticism falls outside Owen's main area of interest, but she characterises the mystical/occult revival as offering 'a range of spiritual alternatives to religious orthodoxy', p.20.
- ³⁹ Evans, 'Editor's Preface', pp.15-17.
- ⁴⁰ M.E. Hamilton, n.d., pp.8-9, Elizabeth M. Church, 4 July 1912, pp.71-72, Rev. J.R. Illingworth, 22 June 1908, p.141, 'An Adventure: Typewritten Correspondence and Statements', Bodleian MS. misc. d. 249.

⁴¹ Oppenheim, *The Other World*, pp.135-36.

⁴² Annie Moberly to Lolly, 3 May 1911, Cambridge: University Library, Society for Psychical Research Manuscript Collections (hereafter SPR Manuscript Collections), SPR.MS 61:1:11; Iremonger, *The Ghosts of Versailles*, p.156..

⁴³ Alice Johnson to Annie Moberly, 10 February 1911, Bodleian, 'Manuscript Correspondence with the SPR. Additional to those letters included in the typewritten volumes and their manuscript references in two volumes', p.7, MS.ENG.misc.D. 251.

⁴⁴ Annie Moberly, no title [typewritten account of meetings with Alice Johnson on 15 February 1911 and later at the Ladies University Club], pp.9-11, 'Manuscript Correspondence with the SPR. Additional to those letters included in the typewritten volumes and their manuscript references in two volumes', Bodleian, MS.Eng.misc.D. 251.

⁴⁵ 'Review: An Adventure', *Proceedings of the Society of Psychical Research*, (June 1911).

⁴⁶ Annie Moberly, no title [typewritten account of meetings with Alice Johnson on 15 February 1911 and later at the Ladies University Club], 'Manuscript Correspondence with the SPR. Additional to those letters included in the typewritten volumes and their manuscript references in two volumes', pp.9-11, Bodleian, MS.Eng.misc.D. 251.

⁴⁷ Annie Moberly to Alice Johnson, 14 April 1911, 'Manuscript Correspondence with the SPR. Additional to those letters included in the typewritten volumes and their manuscript references in two volumes', pp. 17-19, MS.Eng.misc.D. 251.

⁴⁸ Press Cutting: 'Review: an Adventure (1911)', *Proceedings of the Society of Psychical Research*, 'Manuscript Correspondence with the SPR. Additional to those letters included in the typewritten volumes and their manuscript references in two volumes', pp.25-30, Bodleian, MS.Eng.misc.D.251.

⁴⁹ M.D. Sherriff, 'Passionate Spectators: on Enthusiasm, Nymphomania and the Imagined Tableau', in Lawrence E. Klein and Anthony J. La Vopa (eds.), 'Introduction', *Enthusiasm and Enlightenment in Europe, 1650-1850* (San Marino, CA, 1999), 51-83, Susan Juster, 'Sinners and Saints: Women and Religion in Colonial America', in Nancy A. Hewitt (ed.), *A Companion to American Women's History* (Oxford, 2002), 66- 80. To highlight the gendered element of enthusiasm is not to say that it only applied to women, many of the earliest attacks on enthusiasm focused on men.

⁵⁰ For the gendered politics of spiritualism, see Alex Owen, *The Darkened Room*. Owen argues that women were able to subvert this gendered dynamic in order to acquire a form of power and authority in spiritualist settings.

The occult revival differentiated itself from spiritualism by asserting a masculine persona – 'intellect, self-assertion, knowledge, science and power', Owen, *The Place of Enchantment*, p. 89. Hazelgrove, however, has emphasised how conservative ideals of passive femininity were also deployed to control female mediums, Hazelgrove, *Spiritualism and British Society*, p.6, 81-87.

⁵¹ Press Cutting: Andrew Lang, 'Adventure or Misadventure?', *The Morning Post*, 7 July 1911, Bodleian, 'Manuscript Correspondence with the SPR. Additional to those letters included in the typewritten volumes and their manuscript references in two volumes', p.33 MS.Eng.misc.D. 251. See also *Manchester Guardian*, 29 Jan 1911, p.5.

⁵² Charlotte Anne Elizabeth Moberly, no title [typewritten account of meetings with Alice Johnson on 15 February 1911 and later at the Ladies University Club], Bodleian, 'Manuscript Correspondence with the SPR. Additional to those letters included in the typewritten volumes and their manuscript references in two volumes', pp.9-11, MS.Eng.misc.D. 251.

⁵³ Marsha L. Richmond, '"A Lab of One's Own": The Balfour Biological Laboratory for Women at Cambridge University, 1884-1914', *Isis*, 88: 3 (1997), 422-55. The laboratory trained female students in the natural sciences and was directed by distinguished women graduates.

⁵⁴ Helen Fowler, 'Sidgwick, Eleanor Mildred (1845–1936), College Head', in Colin Matthew (ed.), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (online edn: Oxford University Press, 2004), Haynes, *History of the Society for Psychical Research*, p.191.

⁵⁵ Alice Johnson, 'Trianon Adventure', SPR Manuscript Collections, SPR.MS 61:1:21.

⁵⁶ Press Cutting: 'Letter from Oliver Lodge to Editor', *Church Family Newspaper*, 17 March 1911, 'Manuscript Correspondence with the SPR. Additional to those letters included in the typewritten volumes and their manuscript references in two volumes', p.14, Bodleian, MS.Eng.misc.D. 251.

⁵⁷ 'Review: An Adventure (1911)', *Proceedings of the Society of Psychical Research* (June 1911).

⁵⁸ Andrew Lang to Annie Moberly, 3 July 1911; Andrew Lang to Annie Moberly, 4 July 1911, 'Manuscript Correspondence with the SPR. Additional to those letters included in the typewritten volumes and their manuscript references in two volumes', pp.20-23, Bodleian, MS.Eng.misc.D. 251.

⁵⁹ Eleanor Sidgwick co-authored three papers published by the Royal Society with the experimental physicist Lord Rayleigh, Fowler, 'Sidgwick, Eleanor Mildred (1845–1936)'.

⁶⁰ Press Cutting: 'Letter from Oliver Lodge to Editor', *Church Family Newspaper*, 17 March 1911, 'Manuscript Correspondence with the SPR. Additional to those letters included in the typewritten volumes and their manuscript references in two volumes', p.14, Bodleian, MS.Eng.misc.D. 251.

⁶¹ Luckhurst argues that, such was the snobbery of the SPR and its distinction between testimonies provided by educated and mere superstitious reports by 'uneducated and simple persons', "For many in the Society there was proof enough in the social status of the respondent", Luckhurst, *The Invention of Telepathy*, p. 148-150.

⁶² Press Cutting: Andrew Lang, 'Adventure or Misadventure?', *Morning Post*, 7 July 1911, 'Manuscript Correspondence with the SPR. Additional to those letters included in the typewritten volumes and their manuscript references in two volumes', p.33, Bodleian, MS.Eng.misc.D. 251. See similar reassurances in Press Cutting: Andrew Lang, "A Strange Day Dream", *Morning Post*, 3 Feb 1911, *ibid.*, p.5.

⁶³ For accusations against working-class female spiritualists, see Owen, *The Darkened Room*, p.51; Hazelgrove, *Spiritualism and British Society*, p.17, 90, 95. The crime of fraudulent mediumship was part of the Vagrancy Act. Female secularists were similarly accused of sexual as well as religious unorthodoxy, and thus found it far more difficult to be accepted into an intellectual mainstream, Schwartz, *Infidel Feminism*.

⁶⁴ For this argument, see Lilian Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love between Women From the Renaissance to the Present* (New York, 1981). It is suggested that, in the early decades of the twentieth century, women's colleges remained one of the places, fewer and fewer in number, where women continue to be able to practice female marriages and retain a more positive sense of the meaning of their connection with other women, Elizabeth Edwards, 'Homoerotic Friendship and College Principals, 1880-1960', *Women's History Review* 4:2 (1995), 149-163.

⁶⁵ Charlotte Anne Elizabeth Moberly and Eleanor Jourdain, *An Adventure* (5th.; London, 1955), p.85.

⁶⁶ Charlotte Anne Elizabeth Moberly, 'An Appreciation', *The Imp*, Summer 1924 p. 1-3.

⁶⁷ C.A.E. Moberly, 'History of St Hugh's', *St Hugh's Club Paper* (Jan 1889), St Hugh's Archive.

⁶⁸ Annie Moberly to Frederick Macmillan, 2 Jan 1912, University of Reading, MAC MOB 221/216.

⁶⁹ Annie Moberly to Frederick Macmillan, 15 March 1911, 27 Nov 1912, 8 June 1911, University of Reading, 220/293, 221/124, 215/343. Likewise, occultists sought to disassociate themselves from what they perceived to be the more vulgar Spiritualist movement that preceded them, Owen, *The Place of Enchantment*, p.5, 19-20. Historians have argued that the Victorian and Edwardian spiritualist movement was, to a large extent, a movement of the disenfranchised – the working classes and women, see Owen, *The Darkened Room*; Oppenheim, *The Other World*. Georgina Byrne has challenges this: 'far from being the preserve of the urban working classes, spiritualism was vibrant among all classes in rural as well as urban areas of the country', Byrne, *Modern Spiritualism*, p 13.

⁷⁰ Luckhurst, p.56-50; Hazelgrove, p.4.